

I have always prided myself on being an optimist. I've felt that a clear vision and a strong will can sometimes make the seemingly impossible come true. I will admit however, that there were some days over the past year, that really tested my optimism – some days that I thought we'd never arrive at this day – the welcome and uncasing ceremony for 6th Squadron, 17th US Cavalry at Fort Wainwright Alaska.

LTG Fraser, MG Jacoby, distinguished guests, families, and most importantly – elite cavalry troopers of 6th Squadron, welcome to today's ceremony.

Well there's a couple of ways you could look at this event. You could view as just a short welcome ceremony for a very small force of 122 Soldiers and just 9 helicopters that arrived to us over the past weeks. And it is that. And it's certainly important to welcome these 122 Soldiers and their families. But if you focus only on this small formation and their less than a troop's worth of helicopters, you will have missed the bigger story that is being written here today. For on this field today, we have uncased the colors of 6-17th Cavalry Squadron in Alaska – and that's significant – significant for Alaska, significant for the Pacific Theater, and significant for our Army. For over the next 15 months, from this nucleus we will build a 380 man squadron with 30 attack/reconnaissance helicopters. This squadron brings a capability to Alaska – a capability that we have already rehearsed and benefited from. Within days of their arrival, air cavalry crews were above the CACTF across the runway training close combat

attack with 4-25th BCT fire support teams. And as I witnessed that training, I knew that every ounce of energy we expended to bring this squadron to Ft Wainwright was worth it. Next week these helicopters, aircrews and maintenance personnel will load out for JRTC where they will provide critical air-ground integration training with 4-25th Infantry. That's the story being written today – the 6-17th Cavalry is in Alaska to train with USARAK's brigade combat teams – to prepare for the combined arms fight that is ongoing every day in Afghanistan and Iraq. The training we are conducting with 4-25 and soon with 172nd will save lives on the battlefield, and that's why we are very fortunate to have these brilliant colors unfurled here today.

I would like to thank MG Jacoby for his leadership on this restationing. Sir, there were a hundred reasons to delay this action until years down the road, and there were a cast of naysayers at every echelon working alternate courses of action that would not have brought us to this place and time. But you knew how important this was and never let go of the vision to bring this capability to Alaska today. Thanks to you and your staff for the tenacity and perseverance.

The OH-58D is an awesome aircraft with its hellfire, 2.75 inch rockets and .50 caliber machine guns, but the unit's most impressive weapons systems are the Soldiers you see assembled on the parade field today. So I will save my final remarks and thanks for them. At the end of the whip of uncertainty and indecision on the 6-17th movement were these Soldiers and their families in

Hawaii. On very short notice, these folks raised their hands and volunteered to move to Alaska – to uproot their lives and serve the Army's needs. For all the thanks we issue today, none is more important or heartfelt than that we give to the Soldiers and their families – for their patience as we sorted all this out, for their flexibility when we finally told them to move, and for their spirit as they hit the ground here in Alaska. Just like their unit motto – 6-17th is out front and they have had an immediate and positive impact on this community. LTC Brown, CSM Mitchell, officers, non-commissioned officers and troopers of 6-17th - thanks for your selfless service; it is our honor today to have you join the ranks of Task Force 49 and the United States Army Alaska. Arctic Talons!